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ABSTRACT

The instructor of a course entitled "Leadership in Meetings" used as a textbook of "Fundamentals of Parliamentary Law and Procedure, Second Edition: The Rules for Deliberative Assemblies," sponsored by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. Despite a strong endorsement of the text, the instructor had some reservations. For example, although the inclusion of answers at the end of the book is a popular feature for students, its instructional value is questionable. The stated purpose of the course was to offer students a greater awareness of his/her democratic heritage and the responsibilities of effective leadership in groups that use parliamentary procedure when making decisions. Class activities included: lectures, role playing in small groups, reports about attendance at meetings outside of class, quizzes, a mid-term exam, and a final exam. Some small-group activities worked well, but there were some difficulties with extemporaneous and impromptu "original" main motions and nonscripted dialogue. The Hearst text assisted in reducing the length of lectures to coincide with the attention span of more activity-oriented students. Few students expressed opinions about the text. Some students have used the parliamentary procedures they learned in the course in student government and other contexts. The Hearst text, because it represents a synthesis of basic concepts the instructor learned over the years, was invaluable to the instructor. (RS)

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USING THE HEARST TEXT:

FUNDAMENTALS OF PARLIAMENTARY LAW AND PROCEDURE SECOND EDITION

The Rules For Deliberative Assemblies

The National Parliamentary Education Project

of the

American Institute of Parliamentarians

sponsored by the

William Randolph Hearst Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary Procedure was of minimal interest to me during my undergraduate years. Rather, it was during graduate school when I took a course in parliamentary procedure with Demeter's *Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure* as the textbook that my interest began to grow to its current dimension and intensity. I am now and have been for a decade a serious student and professor of the subject at Framingham State College in Massachusetts. Prior to then I had taught on occasion and in response to student request a course in parliamentary procedure. Also, I have been for some time a "designated parliamentarian" at The College.

During a sabbatical spent in Tucson, Arizona, where I enrolled as a visiting professor-graduate student at The University of Arizona, I joined the American Institute of Parliamentarians, the organization responsible for a textbook initially sponsored by a grant from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation.. This textbook, which was first published in the form of two workbooks, was reprinted in 1992 as a single book under the title of *Fundamentals of Parliamentary Law and Procedure, Second Edition*, with the subtitle, *The Rules of Procedure for Deliberative Assemblies.* The publisher for both editions was Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa.

As a new member of A.I.P., I would listen with anticipation about the formative stages of this text. Once the first edition was available, my students used it. Three classes that averaged twelve Communication Arts majors enrolled in a course entitled Leadership in Meetings. The last group also purchased Demeter's *Manual* and received my remaining paperback copies of the 1981 edition of *Robert's Rules Of Order Newly Revised.*

The advent of the second edition was beneficial to an expanded enrollment in this course for the spring semester of 1993. A recent consolidation of the Speech and Media departments into the Communication Arts Department had resulted in an unusually large number of seniors whose "corporate and speech concentrations" required them to take the course for graduation. Therefore, there were thirty one students, who started and finished this course.

The preceding autobiographical introduction serves as a context in which to place a most welcome publication -- the focus of this presentation. In fact, the materials heretofore used in teaching parliamentary procedure might have been inadequate for the successful teaching of this subject to these students at this time.

Despite my strong endorsement of this text in the "Introduction", however, there were concerns which caused some hesitation in choosing it for the course. Undoubtedly the many contributors to the book expressed most of these reservations before publication so I'll not list them, but comment briefly about two that were most outstanding.

This current edition of *Fundamentals of Parliamentary Law and Procedure* -- more succinctly referred to as The Hearst Book because of the original sponsorship -- is an unconventional textbook for college students. The answers are included at the end of the book rather than under separate cover. While this feature is popular with many students, its instructional value is questionable. Therefore, professors might be hesitant to adopt it. Also, the variety of "parliamentary authorities" is still a topic for controversy. Many contend that so many experts can lead to confusion when discussing what is acceptable and what is unacceptible parliamentary procedure. Therefore, many professors might be more comfortable with a single parliamentary manual such as *Robert's Rules Newly Revised*, Sturgis' *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, or Demeter's *Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure* and a personal syllabus.

Nevertheless, this text, despite any imperfections one might cite, was not intended as a parliamentary manual but as a teaching text. It may be used in the different groups as intended by its authors, but I believe that it is most serviceable for a course where the students will be committed over a specified time period. Also, the price was right. Therefore, it seemed very appropriate to adopt it for the course, Leadership in Meetings.

A course with a definite and sustained class schedule is beneficial to maintaining the continuity and connection of principles with practice in learning parliamentary procedure. Leadership in Meetings met four hours a week for fourteen weeks. (Two fifty minute periods on Monday and Wednesday and a double period on Thursday). Anticipated were few students who were choosing the course because of elected positions in student government, or as class officers, or club leaders. Rather, it was expected that each student would have a different level of interest or degree of motivation when signing up for the course. Therefore, I tried to assure them that each one who would commit the necessary time and energy to class participation and meetings would discover a subject that is lively and challenging.

The stated purpose of the course was to offer students a greater awaremess of his/her democratic heritage and the reponsibilities of effective leadership in groups who use parliamentary procedure when making decisions. In the syllabus it was claimed further that opportunities to learn the best of parliamentary procedures and practice in applying parliamentary rules when speaking, listening, discussing, and debating should make a more helpful and secure participant in society Thus, theory and practice combined to provide the foundation for instruction.

Assignments followed the sequence of the chapters in the book with supplementary readings placed on special reserve. Activities within class time included the following: lectures, roleplaying in small groups as well as within the larger class, reports about attendance at meetings outside of class, quizzes, a mid-term, and final. Furthermore, during the second quarter, the major project was for each student to write original bylaws for a hypothetical organization. Directions in the text were thorough.

Particular activities seemed to work well; for example, separating the class into small groups to organize into a hypothetical society, practice in wording and evaluating original main motions, examining minutes and committee reports, and reenacting mock meetings that were both scripted and nonscripted. Students seemed to enjoy the small group activities while from the teacher's perspective, the bylaws project separated "thinkers" from "memorizers.".

On the other hand, there were some difficulties with extemporaneous and impromptu "original" main motions and nonscripted dialogue. Thinking up motions and weak self-discipline when reacting to "frivolous" motions were occasional problems. At times, the desire to create disorder from order was, in a large class with diverse personalities, a temptation; but no "real" parliamentarian would advise a chairman to rule against a sense of humor and a good laugh.

The text assisted in reducing the length of lectures to coincide with the attention span of more activity-oriented students. In fact, the variety of exercises and questions at the end of the "Lessons" helped to provide a "reality" which most students had not experienced but needed to visualize before understanding the purpose of the motions. Yet supervising the required supplementary readings so important to the underlying philosophy of the text required my paraphrasing the comparisons and providing handouts because accessibility was limited. One copy of each of the supplementary texts was all that the library policy would allow to be ordered. Therefore, even after adding a departmental copy with one of my own, the availability was inadequate for even a more normal size class of twenty. Ideally, each student would purchase these books, but this was not financially feasible for them.

Before the conclusion of the course, each student had a chance to be a "chairman" in front of the entire class. While achievement varied considerably, I believe that critiquing these performances was very important. By the end of the semester, there was apparently greater familiarity with motions, committee work, reports, and minutes as well as with the challenges in trying to preside.

Regarding student opinion about The Hearst Text, there was little response to my inquiries. While none criticized it to me, only two students volunteered that it was "really very good." Most, I believe, had little interest in defining an opinion because they had no basis for comparison; the subject matter was very new. Also, their organizational experience beyond the classroom was , for most, a rare one.

CONCLUSION

Everyone was present for the final written examination. Once the scores were talied, everyone passed the course -- some with distinction; others with the lowest passing grade.

But that is the past. The future is even more promising after listening to a student report on the use of parliamentary procedure at a Broadcasting Convention in St. Louis or reading the names of former students who have become student senators or the student trustee. And finally, there is the unique student who has expressed repeated interest in the subject and especially in the certification process. A political science major active in College governance and in student government, she is researching a revision of the student government constitution and is "using the Hearst Book to teach other students."

A few students rather than many will likely determine whether or not a course in parliamentary procedure will be "successful." In the past, articulate (sometimes with the emphasis of over confidence) students have embarrassed faculty with their "knowledge." As the professor of parliamentary procedure. I have heard from my colleagues frequent expression of self criticism about how students have been more competent in the standing committees of The College or impressive as student trustees. In fact this past September, the academic vice president requested a workshop in parliamentary procedure for the faculty, students, and administrators on The College standing committees.

As long as some colleagues, departmental and otherwise, and the current academic vice president and the chairman of the Communication Arts Department concur that a course in parliamentary procedure should be taught, I'll be happy to accommodate. The Hearst Text, because it represents a synthesis of all the basic concepts that I have learned over the years, has been invaluable. I intend to use it again.

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